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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the USSR - Eastern Europe Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Soviet Reaction to Lebanon's Turmoil

The Soviets have publicly welcomed the current breathing spell in Lebanon and have expressed the hope that it will lead to an end to the turmoil. They clearly would prefer to see a more leftist Lebanon come out of the current crisis but fear this cannot be accomplished without taking the lid off the Arab-Israeli powderkeg.

Moscow is worried that turmoil in Lebanon might eventually trigger Syrian and Israeli intervention. This would certainly require the Soviets to increase their support of the Arabs and could touch off broader Arab-Israeli hostilities that Moscow wants to avoid.

The USSR is concerned that civil war and foreign intervention could force the fedayeen to abandon their base of operation in Lebanon and disperse to other Arab countries. The unwelcome result would be reduced Soviet influence and increased fedayeen dependence on Arab governments.

Finally, Moscow has complained that the Lebanese situation is distracting the fedayeen and Damascus from objectives more important to the Soviets--specifically, undercutting US political ascendancy in the Middle East and isolating Cairo. The Kremlin, for example, wants Yasir Arafat to come to Moscow to discuss the post-Sinai II situation, but because of the turmoil the visit has been postponed.

Because of the conflict between Soviet interest in supporting the left and avoiding an intensification of the fighting, the Soviets have at times employed mixed tactics.

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They have consistently praised the "restraint and maturity" of Yasir Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organization for staying out of the fighting and have labeled those fedayeen elements actively involved in the conflict as "terrorists."

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Moscow has [redacted] warned the PLO of the dangers of Israeli intervention and has advised the organization to steer clear of the fighting and to support the efforts of the Lebanese government to assert control over the situation.

At the same time, the Soviets have made it clear that they will support the PLO if its own people and facilities are threatened in Lebanon. In October, they gave tangible evidence of this support in the form of increased arms shipments including 30 rocket launchers especially designed for street-to-street combat.

The Soviets have also weighed in with Damascus. They have praised Syrian efforts to mediate the crisis, and evidently told Asad last month in Moscow that they supported his efforts to reduce tensions in Lebanon.

While the Soviets have not tried directly to stir up the Lebanese situation, they predictably have supported their friends on the left. Moscow has consistently championed Lebanese "progressive forces," supporting their positions on the issues at stake and stressing that they have worked for a negotiated end to the conflict. The Soviets clearly hope the crisis will increase leftist influence in Lebanese political life and strengthen the position of the relatively small, pro-Soviet Lebanese Communist Party (LCP).

The USSR may have encouraged the LCP to enhance its standing with the Lebanese left by participating in the fighting. In the early stages

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of the conflict, the LCP was prominent behind the barricades; in April and May, the Soviets unsuccessfully urged the PLO to arm the party.

But Moscow apparently has not given the LCP all the help it wanted. In September, Lebanese party leaders complained about the lack of stronger, more direct Soviet backing. In October, when the fighting intensified and the conflict threatened to draw in outsiders, the Soviet embassy in Beirut reportedly directed the LCP to withdraw from the fighting.

There is no indication that Moscow has rushed arms to the leftist combatants, but neither is there any sign that the USSR has sought to halt the flow of Soviet-made arms from Arab countries to them. Kamal Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party has continued to buy arms directly from East European countries, while the sources of East European-made arms that the Phalangists had acquired commercially have dried up.

Moscow undoubtedly thinks that as long as the Phalangists are heavily armed, the Lebanese left must have the wherewithal to protect its interests and forestall a right-wing threat to the Palestinian foothold in Lebanon. In any event, the Soviets recognize they cannot close Syrian, PLO, Libyan, and Iraqi arsenals to the left.

Moscow apparently hopes that the Lebanese crisis can be ended through political and social changes that will enhance the position of the Muslim left but which will not jeopardize Lebanon's territorial integrity or stability. The need for such a peaceful settlement of the conflict has been the prevailing theme of Moscow's public comment--including its broadcasts to the Arabs--throughout the crisis. Last week, Soviet Ambassador Soldatov met with Prime Minister Karami and publicly backed his efforts to achieve stability.

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If intensive fighting resumes, the Soviets will probably continue to do what they can to prevent fedayeen or Syrian actions that could lead to general hostilities. At the same time, Moscow will seek to preserve its credentials with the fedayeen and Lebanese leftists, perhaps by offering more explicit assurances of Soviet action in the event the Muslim position is threatened and by moving directly to ensure that the leftists continue to be adequately armed. (SECRET NOFORN/NOCONTRACT/ORCON)

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Ceausescu Toasts Le Duan, Needles Soviets

President Ceausescu took advantage of Le Duan's visit to Romania from November 13 to 17 to assert once more Bucharest's determination to pursue its independent policies, free from Soviet interference.

In his toast to Le Duan on November 17, Ceausescu declared that his party seeks closer relations with all Communist and workers parties, thus implicitly including the Chinese. He also said that Romania wants to strengthen socialist unity by stressing the equal rights of all parties, noninterference in internal affairs, and respect for every party's right independently to establish its political line in keeping with the realities of its own situation.

Ceausescu went on to say that respect for independence in party affairs must also apply to state relations. He invoked the spirit of Helsinki to promote some favorite themes--elimination of foreign military bases, withdrawal of all troops within national borders, and the discontinuance of military blocs.

In an allusion to Bucharest's long struggle against Soviet hegemony, Ceausescu lauded the North Vietnamese for demonstrating that a people's determination to defend their national interests and their "sacred right" to develop along the road of socialism can carry them to victory no matter what the odds or the sacrifices.

Le Duan's visit, which came on the eve of the latest round of preparatory talks in East Berlin for a European Communist conference, gave Ceausescu an ideal opportunity to drive home basic Romanian positions. Party secretary Stefan Andrei will press the Ceausescu line during the current deliberations in the East German capital. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Czechoslovakia: A Spark in the Ashes

Czechoslovak dissidents recently used a "little theater" performance on the outskirts of Prague discreetly to demonstrate their solidarity and their subtle defiance of the regime.

According to the embassy, an unannounced, un-advertised, and admission-free performance of John Gay's "Beggars Opera" allowed a "full cross section" of dissident intellectuals to gather publicly in strength and to enjoy dramatic fare uncommon in Husak's "normalized" Czechoslovakia. Unluckily for the local official who permitted the performance, the adaptation of the play was not the approved version by Berthold Brecht that has run successfully in East Berlin.

Instead, the players performed an adaptation by an outspoken critic of the regime, Vaclav Havel, who has turned the play into a stinging political satire aimed at the present leadership. The embassy notes for instance, that the language of the explanation to the beggar-thief on why he should cooperate with the police could have been lifted verbatim from any recent speech by Husak on Czechoslovak cooperation with the Soviet Union.

The dissidents successfully hoodwinked the security forces by concealing the preparations for the performance and by passing word of the event quietly. The regime's reaction to the performance was rapid and tough. Its organizer was interrogated by police for 13 hours and sternly warned against publicizing the event in Western countries. In addition, the entire cast was threatened with arrest. The dissidents themselves have sought to suppress the story, apparently satisfied this time with their modest show of resistance. (CONFIDENTIAL).

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Romanians Fete Syrian Prime Minister

Bucharest reportedly believes that the visit of Syrian Prime Minister Ayyubi last week went "much better than expected."

In an effort to put the best face possible on the visit, both sides put aside bilateral differences on a number of problems--Arab annoyance with Romania's absence from the UN during the vote on anti-Zionism, the Arab boycott of the Romanian national airline TAROM, and the presence of Romanian cargo on board the first ship to pass through the Suez Canal en route to Israel. Media coverage centered on the economic aspects of the talks, but recent Romanian efforts to play a peace-making role in the Middle East undoubtedly worked their way onto the agenda (Staff Notes, November 4).

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Ayyubi arrived with a long list of complaints about past Romanian-Syrian economic relations.

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The final communique is similar to others signed by Romania and the more militant Arabs. There is, for example, no reference to "guaranteeing the security of all states" in the Middle East. The communique does, however, contain one apparent concession to Bucharest--a Syrian pledge to assist Romanian efforts to participate in the non-aligned movement "in appropriate forms." Damascus had reportedly opposed previous Romanian efforts to establish formal ties to the nonaligned. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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How the Soviets See G. M. Korniyenko

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a collection of comments [redacted] over the past several years about G. M. Korniyenko, newly appointed deputy minister of foreign affairs.

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[redacted] Korniyenko is respected in the Politburo and Central Committee for his grasp of American affairs. [redacted] Korniyenko, unlike USA Institute Director Georgy Arbatov, is able to distinguish between good information and analysis and that which is spectacular but speculative and unreliable. Korniyenko's apparent dislike of Arbatov does not extend to all members of his institute. He admires Deputy Director Zhurkin, for one. [redacted]

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[redacted] Brezhnev personally prefers Arbatov as an expert on American affairs, but that Brezhnev's assistants, including A. M. Aleksandrov, who allegedly have a greater understanding of American affairs, recognize Korniyenko's greater strengths. Korniyenko is in close touch with Yu. Firsov, an assistant to Council of Ministers chairman Kosygin.

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[redacted] the USA Department, which Korniyenko headed until his recent promotion, Korniyenko believes relations between the US and the USSR are based on serious competition that must be played honestly and without illusions. Each country has certain interests and will seek benefits from any situation or negotiation and, therefore, the need for compromise should be recognized. One cannot trick the other side into unilateral concession. [redacted]

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[REDACTED] Korniyenko is supported not only by First Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov, but also by Boris Ponomarev, head of the Central Committee International Department. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the relationship between Korniyenko and Ponomarev as excellent and [REDACTED] Korniyenko once worked under Ponomarev in the International Department.

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The glowing characterization of Korniyenko [REDACTED] [REDACTED] may be true, but an element of self-interest cannot be ruled out. Institutional rivalry was almost certainly a factor in [REDACTED] unfavorable comparison of Arbatov with Korniyenko.

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There is no evidence to support [REDACTED] that Korniyenko once worked for Ponomarev.

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